



Mt. Vernon Avenue Business Area Plan

*Community Meeting
December 1, 2004*



Plan Available: www.alexandriava.gov/whatsnew/view_whatsnew.pxe



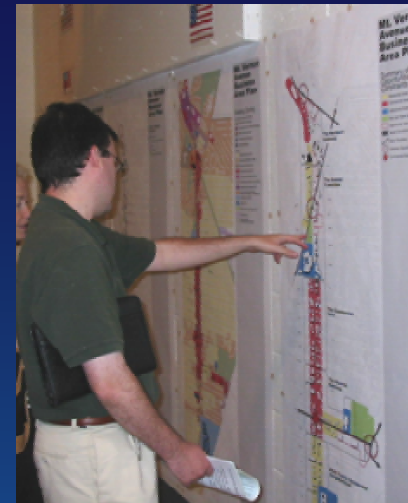
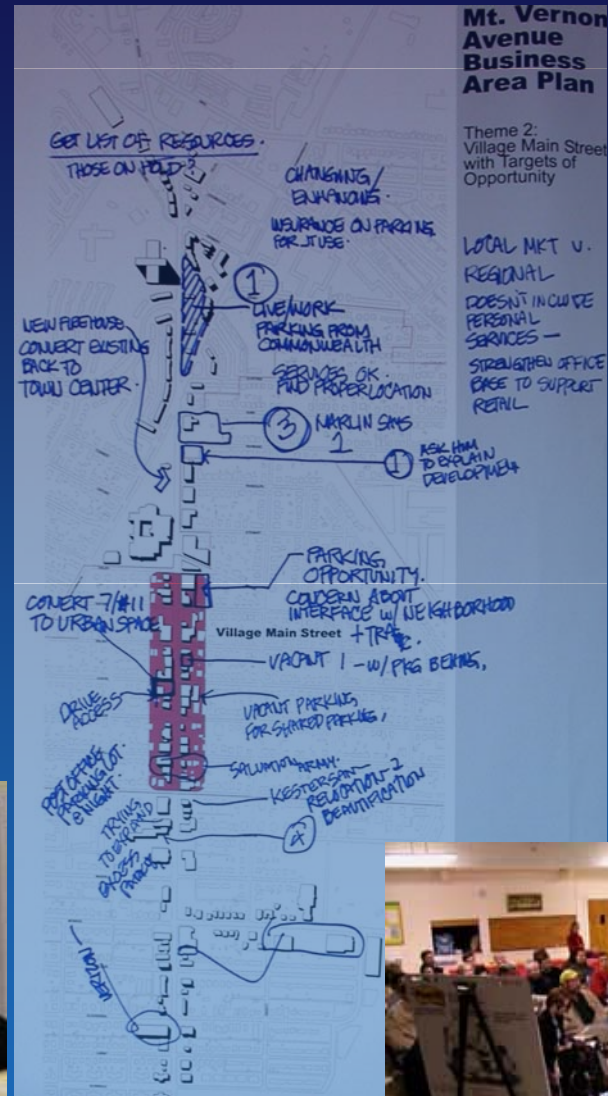
Department of Planning and Zoning
703/838-4666

Introduction

Primary study area

Mt. Vernon Avenue from
Nelson Ave to Herbert Street

**Year-long collaborative
planning process** involving
residents, business people and
community representatives;
including two community
meetings



Mission Statement

Mount Vernon Avenue is a vibrant and welcoming Main Street that reflects the surrounding neighborhoods' diversity, integrity and small-town charm. The Avenue is comprised of enthusiastic, successful and responsible community partners. We offer an eclectic and friendly living, working and shopping environment for Alexandrians and visitors alike.

*There is still a Main Street....
It's called the Avenue*



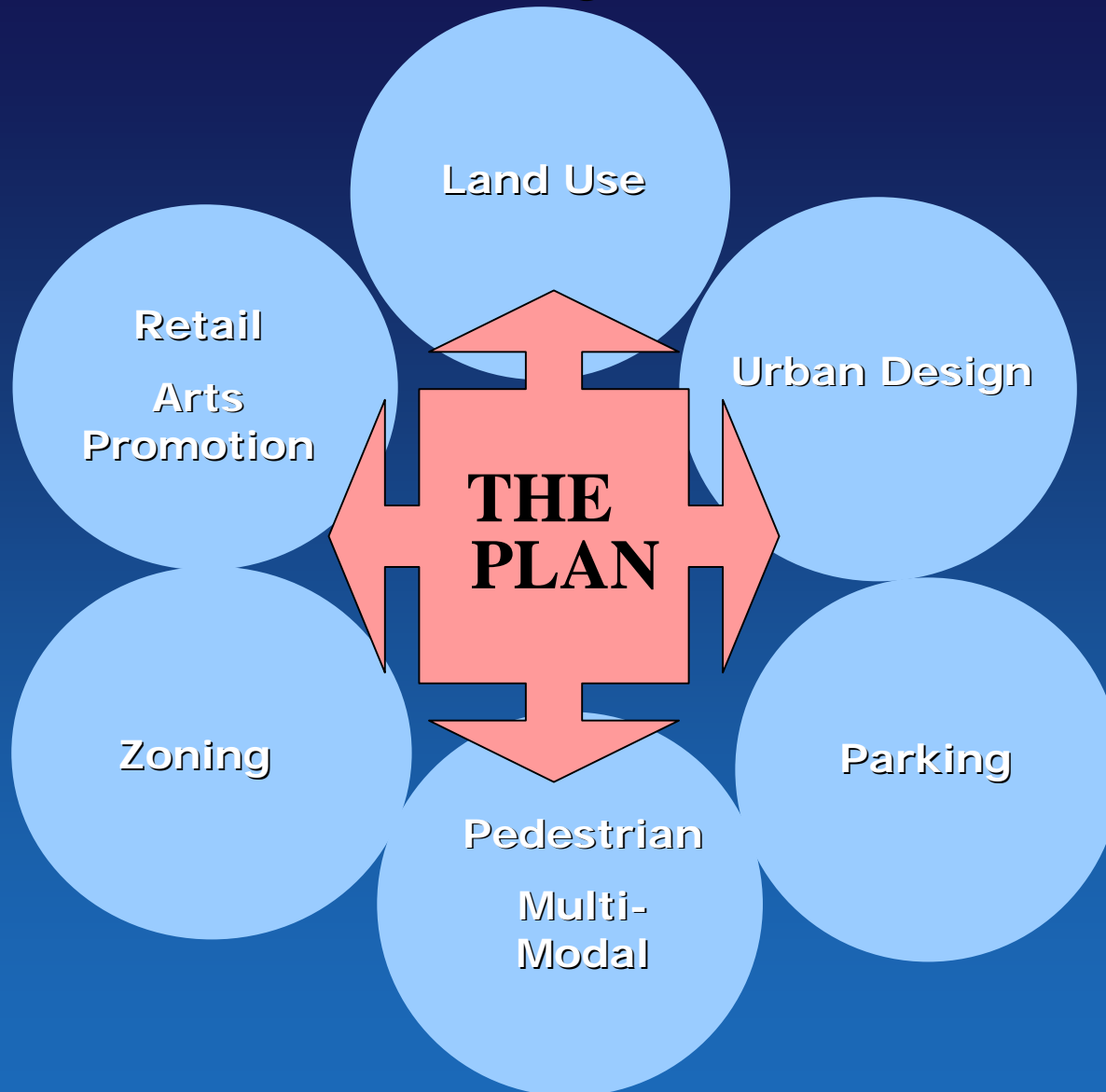
Guiding Principles

Preserve and Enhance eclectic, small town character of Mt. Vernon Avenue while providing an opportunity for businesses to grow, enhancing the Avenue and protecting the neighborhoods

- Enhance the Avenue as a vibrant commercial corridor
- Celebrate the Town of Potomac Historic District
- Preserve existing historic scale and character
- Enhance public spaces
- Preserve and protect residential areas
- Encourage and support mixed use development
- Provide alternative multimodal transportation linkages
- Provide convenient parking and transportation solutions to support retail growth
- Promote partnerships
- Encourage independent retail
- Capitalize on the neighborhood arts community



Strategies





Land Use Strategy



Avenue-Wide Recommendations

- **Promote Appropriate Infill Development**

- Retain historic buildings
- Maintain historic character and scale
- Provide open space

- **Protect Residential Neighborhoods**

- Lower building height near residences
- Provide buffer between commercial and residential properties

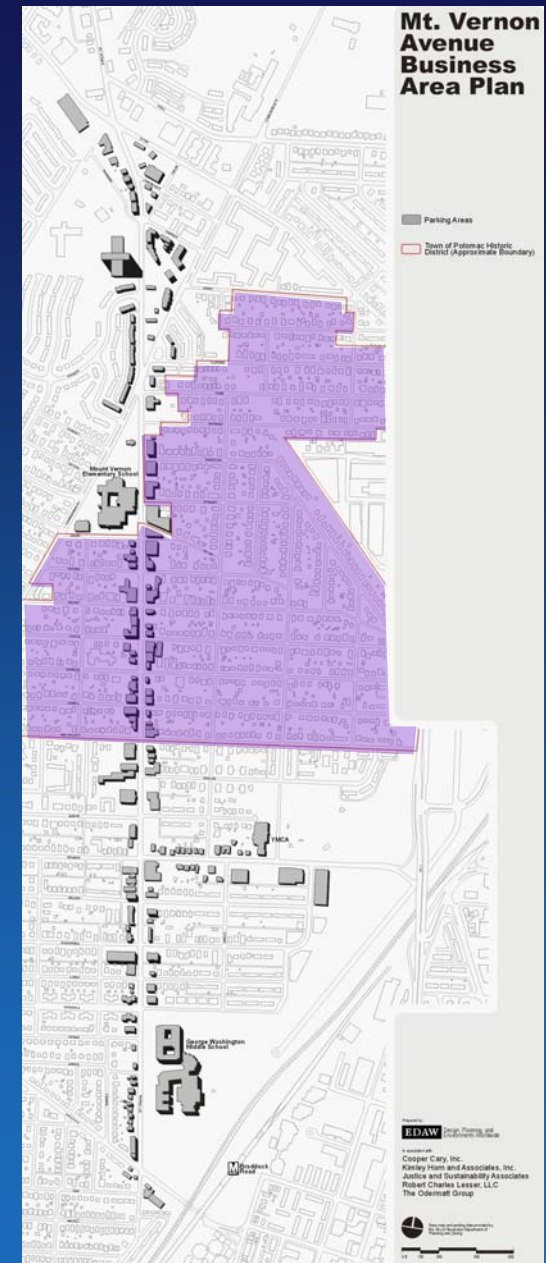
- **Discourage Large Lot Consolidation**

- **Enhance Pedestrian Streetscape**

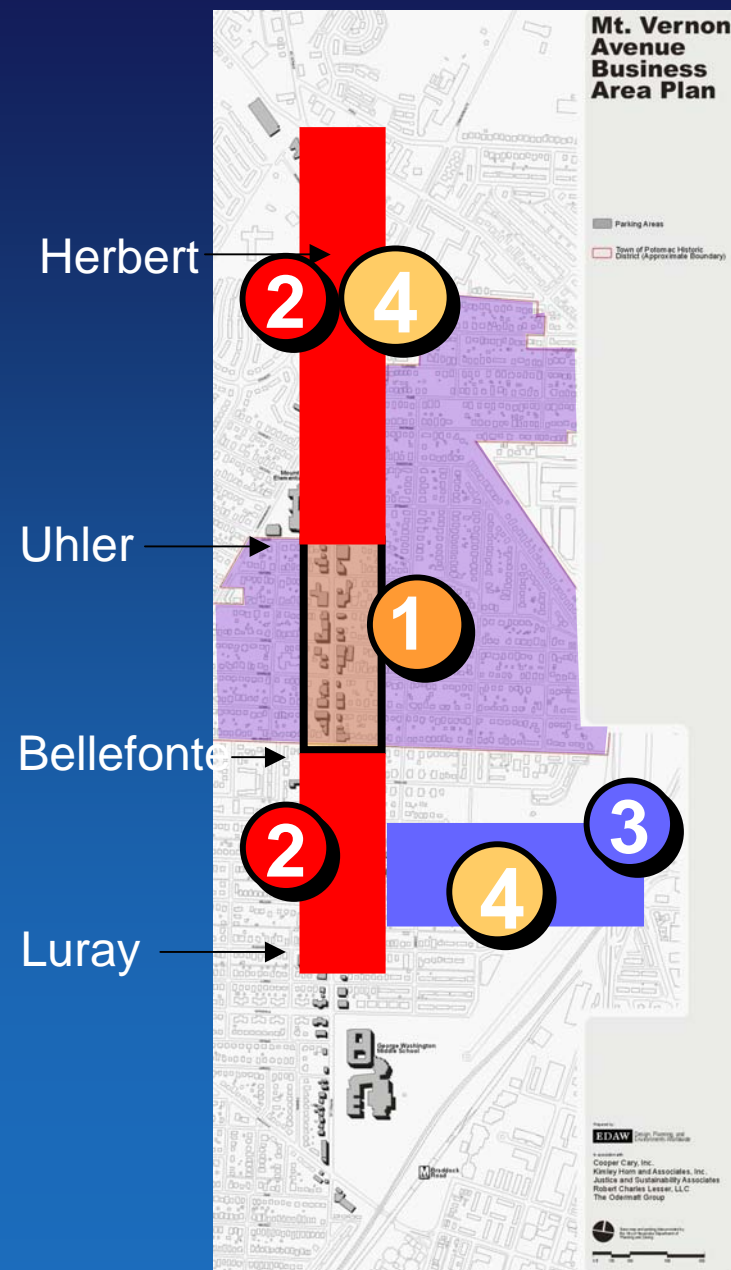
- Pedestrian lighting on sidewalk
- Enhance visual appearance of service and auto-related uses
- Improve sidewalks with pavers and/or landscaping or both

- **Encourage a Mix of Uses**

- Enhance the vibrant “Main Street” with a mix of uses including retail, residential, office and service



- 1** **Historic Core**
(Uhler to Bellefonte Avenue)
 - Focus retail activity
 - Protect historic character
- 2** **Commonwealth District & Bellefonte to Luray Avenue**
 - Encourage mix of uses
 - Streetscape and property improvements
- 3** **Monroe Gateway**
 - Retain Giant/CVS
 - Prepare for changes related to Potomac Yard and Route 1
- 4** **Opportunity Sites**
 - Giant/CVS
 - Triangle



Key Recommendations

- **Encourage Street-Level Retail**
 - Retail focus area
- **Preserve Historic Character**
 - Ensure new development is compatible by using a form approach that defines the volume, mass, and scale of new buildings
- **Create a Public Gathering Space**
- **Protect Adjacent Residences**



Bellefonte

Create an attractive and flexible public gathering space

Option A: Redesign existing city parking lot and sidewalks at Mt. Vernon Avenue and Oxford

Option B: Redesign and expand existing city parking lot to the south (acquire parcel to the south)

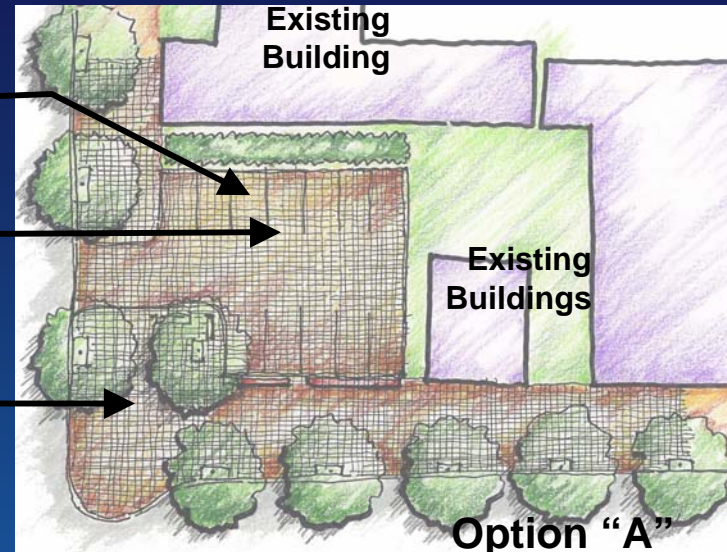
Design Features

- Create flexible space that can serve daily gathering area, parking needs and special events
- Provide seating – benches and low walls
- Implement improved paving material
- Opportunity for public art

Consistent
Special
Paving

12 Parking
Spaces

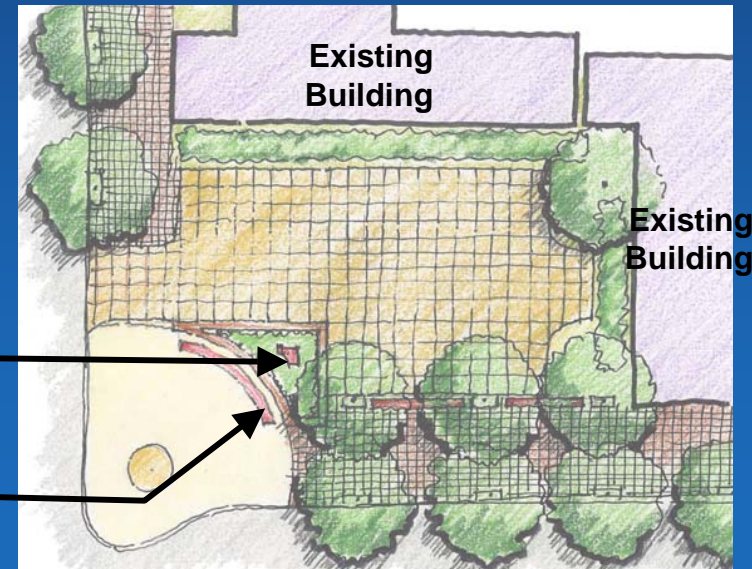
Expanded
Pedestrian
Area at
Corner



18 Parking
Spaces

Public Art
Opportunity

Seating



Option "B"

Uhler to Herbert & Bellefonte to Luray

Key Recommendations

- Encourage a Mix of Uses
- Improve Streetscape/Sidewalk Improvements and Open Space
- Promote Coordinated Redevelopment at Triangle site
- Encourage Façade and Site Enhancements
- Improve Pedestrian Connections to Metro
- Encourage Compatible Infill

Herbert

Uhler

Bellefonte

Nelson

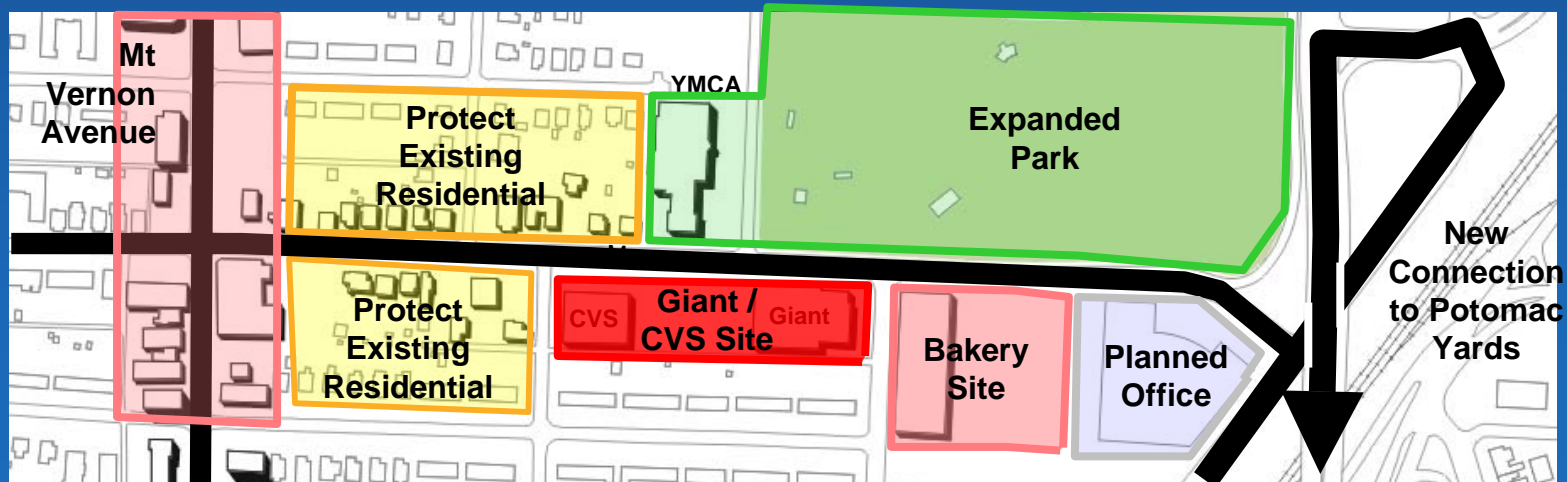
Luray



Monroe Avenue Gateway

Key Recommendations

- Retain CVS/Giant
- Create a gateway into Del Ray in coordination with the Route 1 Bridge improvements
- Protect and enhance the residential areas along Monroe Avenue
- Strengthen linkages to Braddock Road Metro station in coordination with the Route 1 Improvements
- Establish a vision for future use and development of Giant / CVS Site



Desired uses

- Grocery store with pharmacy
- Other retail uses on ground floor
- Residential and/or office on upper floors



Allow modest increase in FAR with SUP and compliance with performance standards

- Building height limited to three stories with stepdowns to ensure compatibility with scale of adjacent buildings and residential to the south
- Ground level public usable open space
- Underground parking
- On-site affordable housing
- Architectural quality



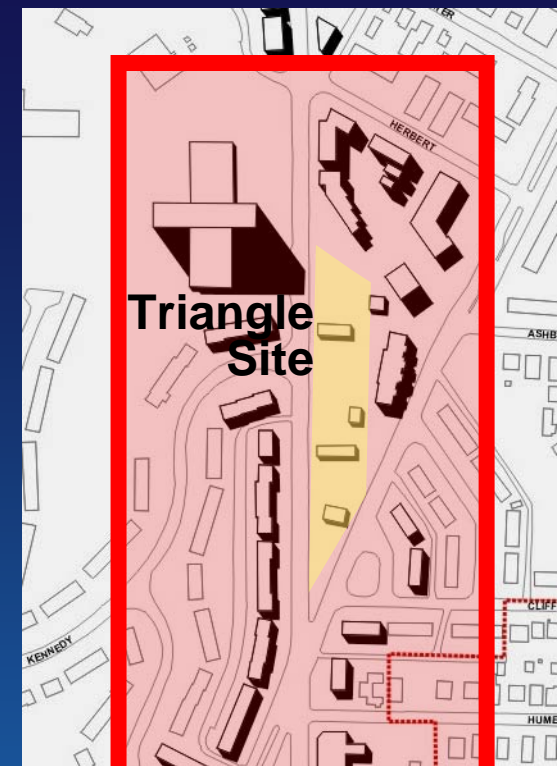
Triangle Site

Desired uses

- Residential and/or office
- Modest ground floor retail

Allow modest increase in FAR in compliance with performance goals:

- Limit height to 3 stories on Mt. Vernon Avenue, stepping down to residences on Commonwealth
- Provide consolidated, visible ground level open space
- Complement existing Avenue character in building design
- Construct underground structured parking
- Provide on-site affordable housing





Urban Design



Principles to Determine Form and Scale

New construction compatible with existing mass and scale

New construction, with ground level retail storefronts should wrap corners

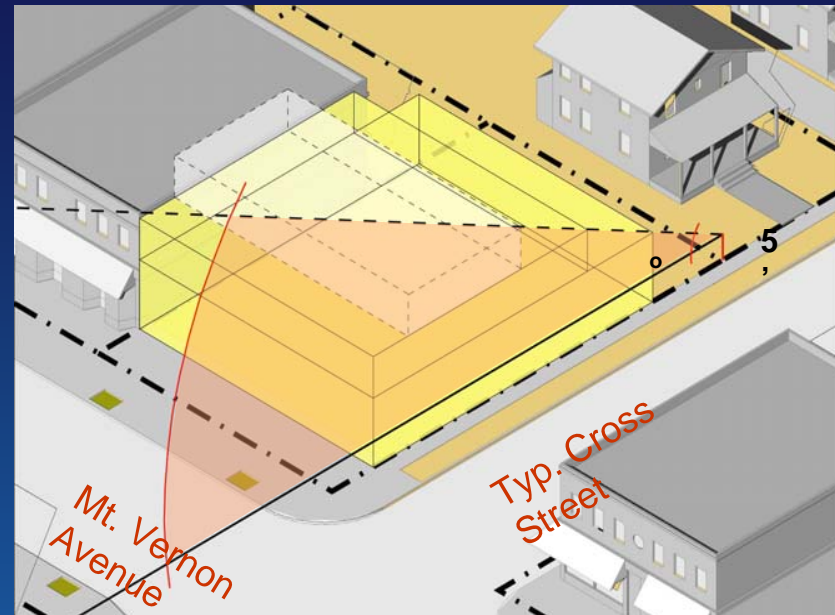
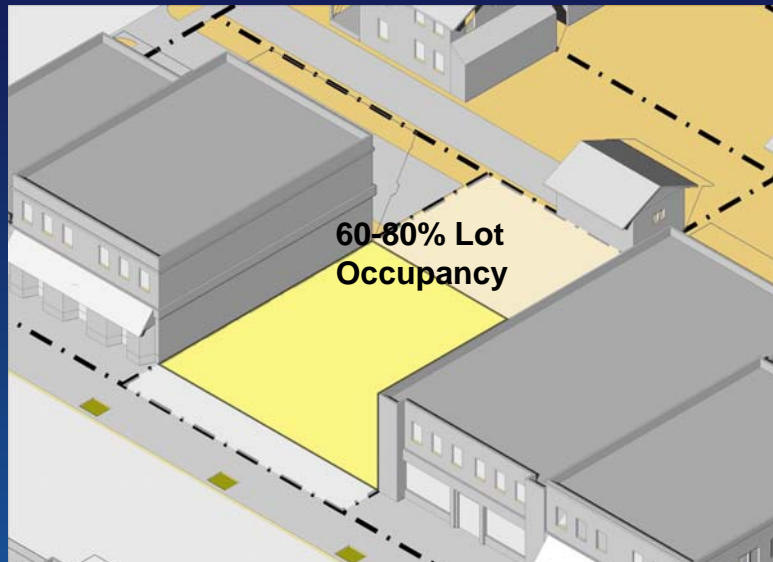
Step back third floor at front facade

Curb cuts are discouraged on Mount Vernon Avenue

Off-street parking located behind buildings, access from side street or alley



Principles to Determine Form and Scale

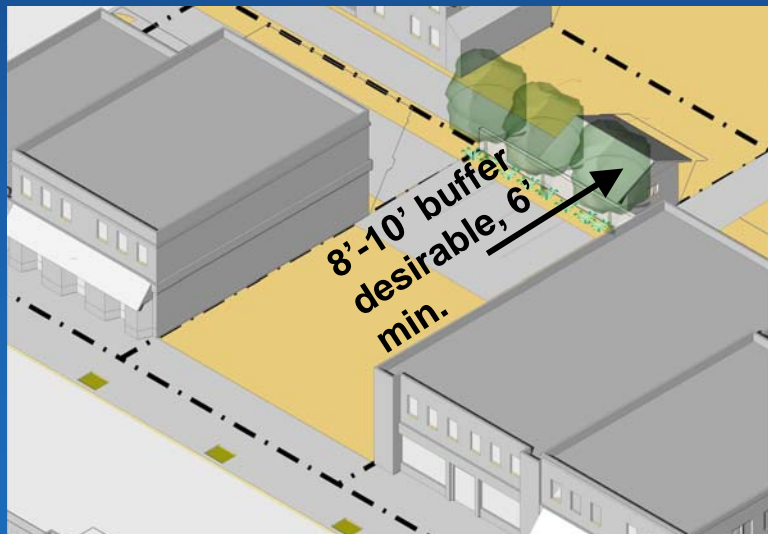


60-80% Lot Coverage

Building Massing

- Building massing and height may not exceed 28 degree angle measured from 5' above the ground at the rear property line

Buffer to protect adjacent residences

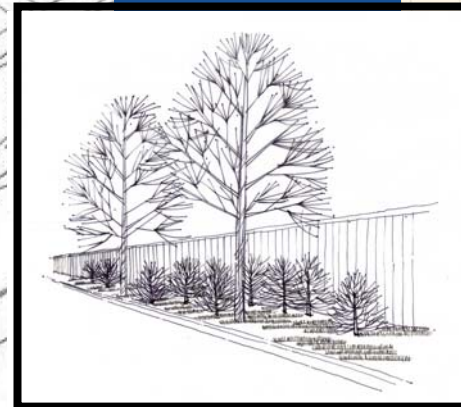
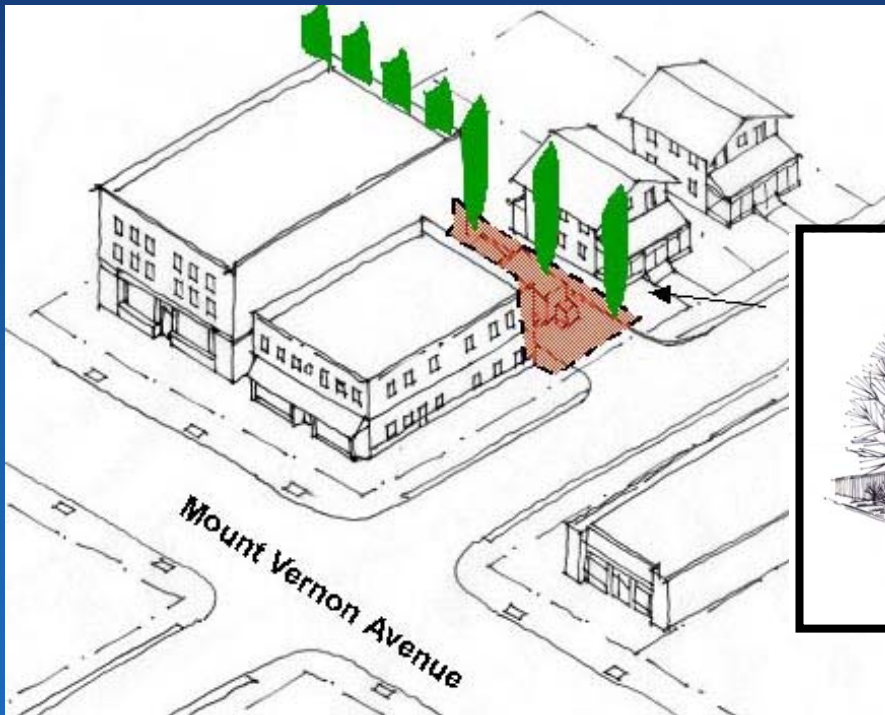


Urban Design

Ensure Protection of Residential Neighborhoods

Step buildings to minimize impact on adjoining residential

Provide buffer/screening options to mitigate visual impact of commercial





Parking Strategy



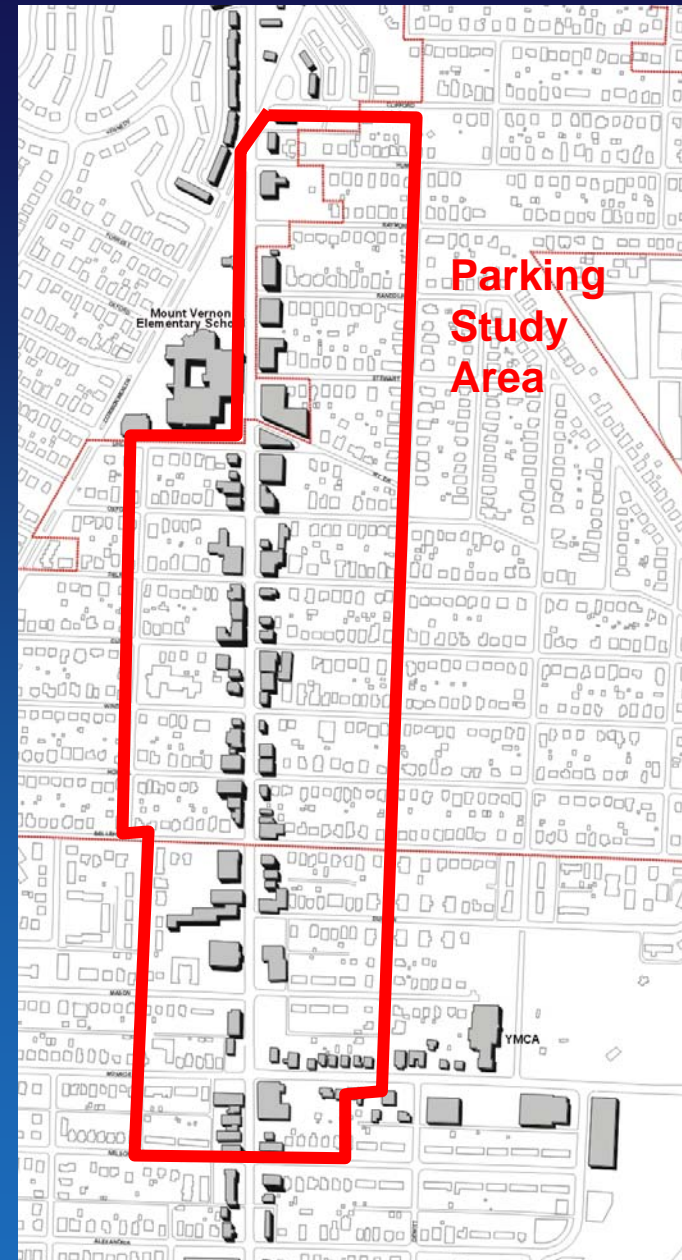
Parking Study

Current Parking Utilization and Demand

- 460 +/- usable spaces on Avenue (select private lots, residential streets within one block of Avenue)
- 140-262 unused spaces (30-60%) in core depending on day/time
- 40-70% unused spaces located in private lots

Parking Supply and Demand in Balance

As change and new construction occur, allow flexibility in parking while maintaining an overall balance

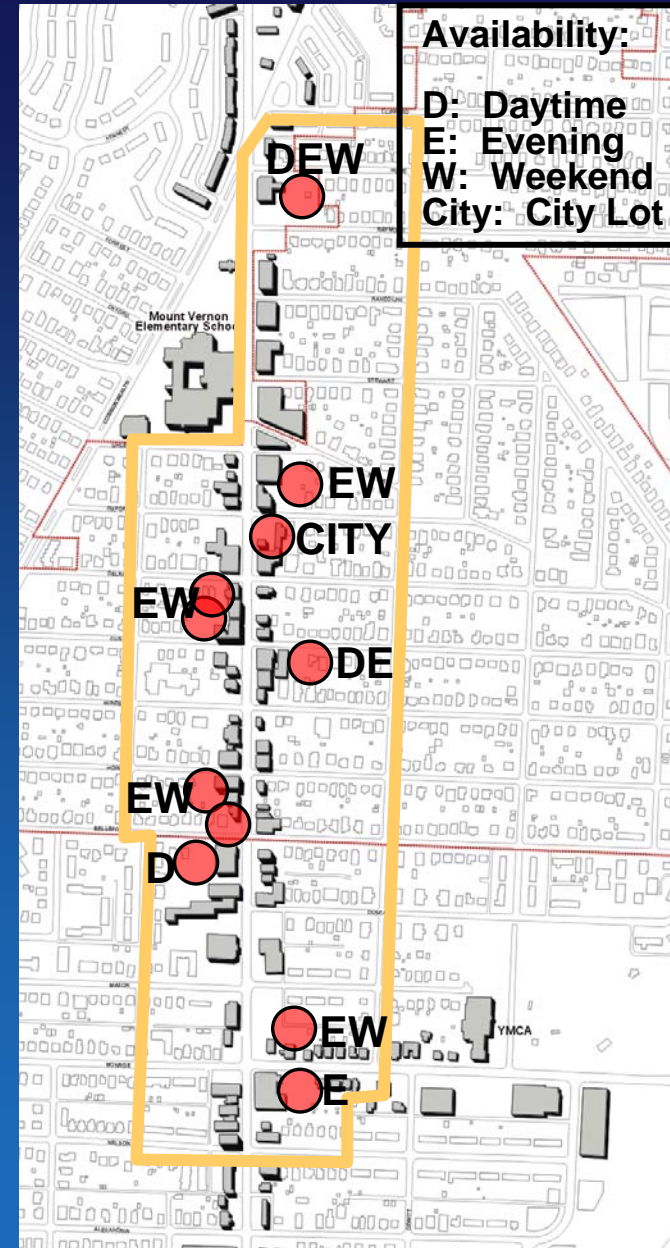


Shared parking program

- Use private lots for employee parking to allow customers to park on Avenue and afford greater turnover of spaces for customers
- Implementation Issues: compensation, liability, maintenance, lighting, education, signage
- Organization to address issues, monitor parking, promote shared parking program

Parking overlay district

- Waive additional parking requirements for change in use from office and personal service to retail
- Restaurants provide parking except for outdoor seating
- Reduce on-site requirement by 50% for small lots/additions with compatible design
- No reduction for tear downs of existing contributing buildings or larger/consolidated lots



Parking

Parking Strategy

Monitor parking utilization and determine when additional parking strategies are necessary to meet increased demand

Develop thresholds for utilization that trigger more proactive response to parking demand:

Install meters along Avenue and residential permit parking in neighborhood (long term strategy)

Establish public/private partnership to develop new parking





Pedestrian/Multi-Modal Strategy



Multi-Modal

Multi-modal strategy to support and enhance the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Avenue and the neighborhood

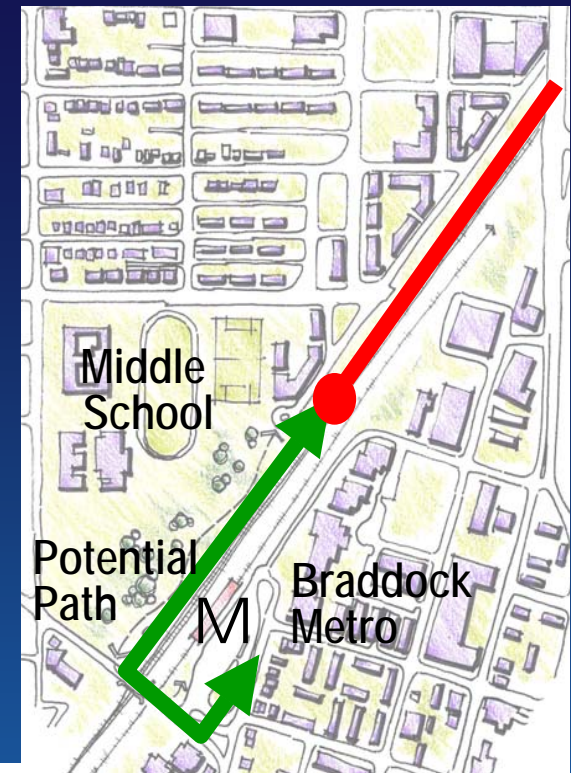
Safer Pedestrian Connections

- Braddock Rd Metro
- Enhance access to existing (and future) trails
- Streetscape/Lighting

Transit Ridership

- DASH service
- Benches/Shelters/Schedule

Reduce Speeding/Increase Pedestrian Safety on Mt. Vernon by changing the 4-lane section to 2 lanes





Zoning Strategy



Mt. Vernon Avenue Overlay District

Ensure preservation of historic character, mass and scale through building form and design guidelines

Existing CL zoning remains as underlying zone as to FAR limitations

3 tier approach to requirements in Overlay District for lot parking and open space for development with SUP in compliance with standards

- **Tier 1** = Lots of 7,000 sf or less
 - Waiver of open space and parking requirements for land-locked lots; some parking required for corner lots and lots with rear access
- **Tier 2** = Lots of 7,001 sf to 15,000 sf
 - 15% minimum ground level open space
 - Reduce required parking by up to half
 - One parking space per new residential unit
- **Tier 3** = Lots greater than 15,000 sf
 - 25% minimum ground level (publicly visible) open space
 - On-site parking required to meet requirement
 - Massing and open space requirements to ensure compatibility



Mt. Vernon Avenue Overlay District

Provide flexible parking requirements for new retail uses and small compatible infill development

- **Waive parking requirements for:**
 - Change in use from office and/or personal service to retail
 - Outdoor dining
 - New mixed use development on land-locked lots with less than 7,000 sf
- **Where cannot provide, reduce parking requirements for:**
 - Reduce office requirement by up to half when located on floors other than ground for lots with 7,001 to 15,000 sf
 - Reduce requirements for corner lots or lots with rear yard access that have 7,000 – 15,000 sf
 - No reduction for tear downs of existing buildings
- **Require SUP parking reduction to reduce parking for:**
 - Any use other than retail that does not comply with current parking requirement
 - Created parking reduction policy to guide review of future requests
- **Other changes:**
 - Require 1 space for each new residential unit



Mt. Vernon Avenue Overlay District

Encourage Neighborhood-Oriented Retail and Related Uses

Permitted or SUP Uses

All of existing permitted or SUP uses in the CL zone except:

Seminary
Medical lab
Public school
Motor vehicle parking
Funeral home
Rooming house

Add:

- Small health-oriented facility (yoga, fitness studio)
- Administrative Uses subject to standards
 - Restaurants with 60 seats or fewer
 - Live theater
 - Outdoor markets
 - Outdoor garden center

Retail Focus Area

Use of first floor limited to:

- Retail
- Restaurant
- Live theater or music venue
- Personal services (30' max frontage)
- Arts and crafts studios (75% of frontage is retail)



Zoning

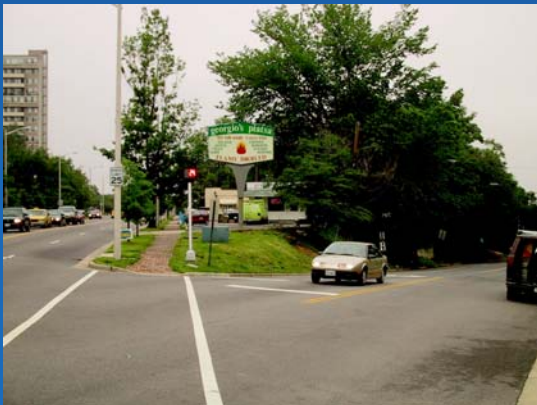
Create CDD #13 – Triangle Site

Desired uses

- Residential and/or office
- Modest ground floor retail

Modest increase in FAR with performance standards (1.25)

- Limit height to 3 stories on Mt. Vernon Avenue, stepping down to residential
- New development provides open space on the site
- Buildings complement existing Avenue character
- Ground level usable public open space
- Construct underground structured parking to meet site parking requirements of development
- On-site affordable housing



Create CDD #14 – Giant/CVS

Desired uses

- Grocery and pharmacy uses
- Residential or office above

Modest increase in FAR with performance standards (1.25)

- Grocery store with pharmacy
- Other retail uses on ground floor
- Residential and/or office on upper floors
- Building height limited to three stories with stepdowns residential
- Ground level usable open space
- Underground parking
- On-site affordable housing
- Architectural quality





Market/Retail Strategy



Retail & Arts Strategy

Market Study:

Demand for approx. 10% additional "Main Street" retail/restaurant space by 2010

- Unique and eclectic stores not competing with larger chain stores
- Strongest demand is for restaurants
- Also demand for Convenience Goods and Home Furnishings stores.

Target complementary businesses:

- *Restaurants*
 - Diner, family-style restaurant, and restaurant with entertainment and/or arts component
- *Specialty foods*
 - Gourmet foods, meat/fish market, confectionaries
- *Home furnishings*
 - Stores offering unique products not available elsewhere
- *Antiques/art galleries*
- *Art supplies*



Retail Design Strategy

Good design increases consumer interest and creates a unique community identity

Facade and Landscaping Improvements

- Signage, painting, and architectural enhancements
- More landscaping between storefronts and sidewalks
- Encourage store window lighting in evening hours



Outdoor Restaurant Seating

- Creates a vibrant street atmosphere

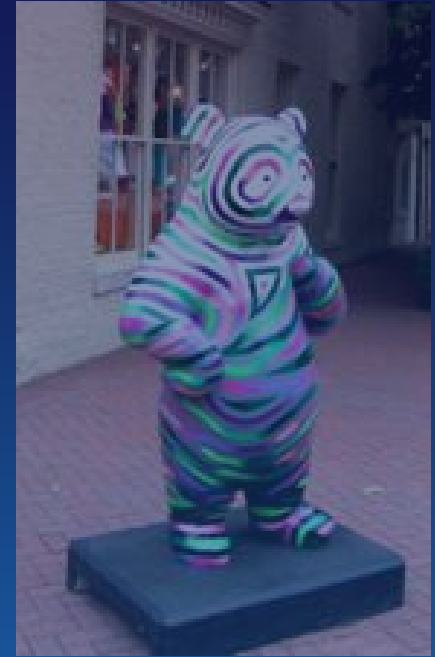
Building Design Guidelines

- Preferred width of a storefront is 20 to 30', maximum of 50'
- Minimum depth of a retail store to be 50', or the depth of the building if less than 50'

Retail & Arts Strategy

Promote the Arts along Mt. Vernon Avenue

- Partner w/ local arts groups (i.e., Del Ray Artisans, Art League, etc.) to promote arts
- Establishing art studios, either in a single building, or dispersed along the Avenue
- Public art
- More festivals and arts promotions
- Art supply store



Implementation



Implementation

Strengthen and Capitalize on Partnerships

- **City of Alexandria**
 - Implement capital improvements in partnership with private property improvements
 - Implement changes to zoning
 - Explore (with PWBA) the creation of a business improvement district
 - Update design guidelines
 - Support the funding for façade improvements
 - Implement coordinated parking strategy
- **Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)**
 - Market the Avenue
 - Implement façade improvement program
- **Small Business Development Center**
 - Assist with development of business plans
 - Services to strengthen existing businesses
- **Potomac West Business Association (PWBA)**
 - Market the Avenue
 - Support programming of the Avenue
 - Coordinate with the property owners
- **Neighborhood Groups**
 - Support businesses and activities
 - Support plan and plan implementation



